

electronic fingerprint identification system had been in synch with the FBI's, the agents would have discovered Batres-Martinez's extensive criminal record. Given his prior deportations, Batres-Martinez could have been charged with re-entry after deportation, a felony that carries a substantial prison sentence. In any event, Batres-Martinez told police in Klamath Falls that he entered the U.S. on Aug. 11, 2002, that time coming through New Mexico. He said he hopped a freight train for San Bernardino, Calif., and looked for work, without success, from Los Angeles to Stockton. When he heard that he might have better luck in Portland, he hopped another train but got mixed up in a freight yard and ended up in Klamath Falls.

To avoid the death penalty, Batres-Martinez pleaded guilty to the murder of Sister Helena Maria, attempted aggravated murder of Sister Mary Louise and rape of both nuns. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

As for U.S. immigration authorities, they were characteristically ineffectual. On Sept. 5, four days after the murder, the INS faxed an immigration detainer to the Klamath County jail, concerning Maximiliano Silerio Esparza, also known as Victor Batres-Martinez: "You are advised that the action below has been taken by the Immigration and Naturalization Service concerning the above-named inmate of your institution: Investigation has been initiated to determine whether this person is subject to removal from the United States."

Both political parties and their candidates pay lip service to controlling the borders. But neither President Bush nor Senator Kerry supports a system that would end the incentives for border crossers by cracking down on the employers of illegals. T.J. Bonner, president of the National Border Patrol Council, a labor organization that represents 10,000 border-patrol employees, believes the solution is obvious. The U.S. government, he says, should "issue a single document that's counterfeit proof, that has an embedded photograph, that says this person has a right to work in the U.S. And that document is the Social Security card. It's not a national ID card.

It's a card that you have to carry when you apply for a job and only then. The employers run it through a scanner, and they get an answer in short order that says, Yes, you may hire, or No, you may not. That would cut off 98% of all the traffic across the border. With your work force of 10,000 border-patrol agents, you actually could control the borders."

But Bonner doesn't see that happening anytime soon because of pressure from corporate America. And all the available legislative evidence of the past quarter-century supports that view. "All the politicians—it doesn't matter which side of the aisle you're on—rely heavily on the donations from Big Business," he says, "and Big Business likes this system [of cheap illegal labor]."

Unfortunately, in the post-9/11 world, this system puts us in jeopardy."

In the 9/11 commission's final report, now on the best-seller lists, the panel of investigators took note of the immigration breakdown in general, saying that "two systemic weaknesses came together in our border system's inability to contribute to an effective defense against the 9/11 attacks: a lack of well-developed counterterrorism measures as a part of border security and an immigration system not able to deliver on its basic commitments, much less support counterterrorism. These weaknesses have been reduced but are far from being overcome."

Folks on the border who must deal daily with the throngs of illegals are not optimistic that the Federal Government will change its ways.

As Cochise County Sheriff Dever dryly observes, "People in Washington get up in the morning, their laundry is done, their floors are cleaned, their meals are cooked. Guess who's doing that?"

THE BUSH MEDICARE BILL'S DIRTY LAUNDRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, America's newspapers are widely read, except on Saturdays. So it is not much of a surprise that the Bush administration waited until late on a Friday afternoon leading into Labor Day weekend to announce that they were raising Medicare premiums by a record 17.4 percent. That is the sort of news, however, you just cannot suppress, so the news that Saturday was all about the Bush administration's plans to impose the biggest premium increase in Medicare's 38-year history. But the White House public relations office is nothing, if not tenacious. So faced with the bad news and faced with the blame for that increase that would naturally affix to the Bush administration, they did what they always do, they tried to shift the blame. Even though the Republicans have controlled the House and the Senate and the White House for the last 3½ years, it is actually the Democrats, they said, who are responsible for the premium increase. But no one bought it then and no one buys it now. The facts are the facts and no amount of spin, no amount of revisionist history, can change the facts.

Before the Bush Medicare bill became law, the nonpartisan Medicare trustees estimated the monthly Medicare premium increase for 2005 would be \$2. After the Bush Medicare bill became law, the premium increase instead jumped \$11.60. That is the 17.4 percent record increase. The facts are that the premium increase after the Bush Medicare law, which was written by the drug and insurance companies, is five times larger than the premium increase estimated before Congress passed the Medicare law.

So where is all that money going? Where are the billions of dollars out of seniors' pockets, that huge increase, where are those dollars going? The Bush administration is quick to remind us that some of it goes to new preventive health care benefits. That is true. But what they are less eager to say is that a whole lot of it is going directly from seniors' pockets into the pockets of the biggest HMO insurance companies in the country.

The Bush Medicare law creates a \$23.5 billion slush fund that HMOs can use to lure seniors out of Medicare and out of Medicare's reliable, equitable core program into the HMO private insurance. This windfall is in addition, this insurance company payoff, to the payments HMOs receive in exchange

for covering enrollees. It is a bonus largely paid for because of major political contributions the insurance and the drug industries have made to the Bush administration. Seniors who already spend more than 20 percent of their incomes on out-of-pocket health care costs are receiving a giant increase in their Medicare premiums, and HMOs are receiving a giant boost to their bottom line. HMO profits already, before the Bush administration did this, jumped 50 percent last year. They hardly need more money from America's overstretched seniors.

Social Security benefits for seniors will increase by 2 percent next year. So the Social Security increase and the checks that seniors get will go up 2 percent. The Medicare premiums will go up 17 percent. I will say it again. The Bush administration is draining billions from the Medicare trust fund into the pockets of the big insurance companies. At the same time, the Bush administration is emptying the pockets of America's seniors, again to the tune of billions of dollars.

It is no secret that President Bush and his privatization of Medicare plans wants to take the responsibility for retiree health care away from Medicare and give it to HMOs. But to actually make seniors pay more so the President can pave over their Medicare program, every senior should be enraged, every American taxpayer should be outraged and none of us should put up with it.

The bottom line is the Medicare legislation which the President pushed through this Congress and signed was written by the drug industry and the insurance industry. Medicare premiums went up 17 percent announced by the administration earlier this month and the drug companies and the insurance companies have given President Bush and the Republican leadership tens of millions of dollars in political contributions this year. In the end, it is really as simple as that.

STENHOLM DEBT LIMIT AMENDMENT TO TREASURY TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, 3½ years ago, there was a lot of talk around here about budget surpluses. Some folks actually claimed there was a danger that the government would pay off our debt held by the public too quickly. Today, projections of large budget surpluses have been replaced with projections of deficits as far as the eye can see, and the administration is asking Congress to approve another increase in the debt limit, the credit card limit, if you please, for the United States of America.

Last year, the Republican leadership slipped through a \$984 billion increase